

matter how many times their kids try to make them stay away from them.

**Mr. Jennings.** Boy, don't you wish you could get such fast, cogent advice from your Cabinet members? [*Laughter*]

**The President.** It's great, and I think—first of all, I agree with the after-school arguments, the mentoring arguments, the treatment—all the things you have said. But I think it's a good thing that we ended with Ally, because we know that children that have parents who work with them and deal with this issue are much less likely to be in trouble.

NOTE: The town meeting began at 11:06 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

### **Statement on Senate Confirmation of Federico Peña as Secretary of Energy**

*March 12, 1997*

I want to applaud the Senate today for its strong vote of support for Federico Peña to serve as our Nation's new Energy Secretary. As Transportation Secretary, Federico Peña built consensus among communities, business, and government and streamlined operations to reap benefits for all taxpayers.

With this record, I am confident that Secretary Peña has the skill, experience, and dedication to lead the Energy Department to meet its central challenges—to broaden America's energy resources, to promote a safer, more secure world, and to help to create a brighter economic future for all Americans.

### **Remarks on Departure for Raleigh, North Carolina, and an Exchange With Reporters**

*March 13, 1997*

#### **Attack on Israeli Schoolchildren**

**The President.** Today along the normally peaceful border between Israel and Jordan, we have seen an inexcusable and tragic act of violence against schoolchildren. I condemn this act in the strongest possible terms. I offer to Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Israeli people, and the families and friends of

the innocent children who died or were wounded my profound condolences and those of the American people.

As I travel to North Carolina today to speak to people about our own schoolchildren, the senseless denial of a future for these young Israeli children will bear heavily on my mind. There is no justification or excuse for these acts. Now the leaders in the region must work hard to calm the situation, to do everything in their power to create an atmosphere in which violence is rejected rather than embraced.

I call on the leaders and the people of the region to reject violence, to redouble their efforts toward peace and reconciliation. I was encouraged by the statement which King Hussein issued not long ago—just a few moments ago—and I am very hopeful that the leaders and the people will respond in an appropriate manner.

Thank you.

#### **Jerusalem Settlements**

**Q.** Mr. President, do you believe the Israelis have to halt the settlements in East Jerusalem at this point? Do you think that might help calm the situation there?

**The President.** Let me first say that there is no evidence at this moment that this terrible incident is related to the tensions in the area over the issues. For all we know, this may have been just a deranged person. And I think it is important, given King Hussein and Jordan's long record of reaching for peace and reconciliation, that no one jump to any undue conclusions.

We don't have the facts. None of us have any facts other than we know this incident occurred. But we have no reason to believe that this was politically motivated by any larger group or anything. We just don't know that.

But you know what I believe. I believe that this is a time when we need to be building confidence and working together and there needs to be a certain mutuality of action in the Middle East to get this peace process well underway. That is what I had hoped would happen after the Hebron agreement, and that is still what I believe has to happen if we're going to succeed.